DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 060 831 JC 720 075

AUTHOR Park, Young
TITLE Trends and Developments in Institutional Research.
INSTITUTION American Association of Junior Colleges, Washington, D.C.; California Univ., Los Angeles. ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Coll. Information.
PUB DATE Apr 72
NOTE 4p.
JOURNAL CIT Junior College Research Review; v6 n8 April 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Research; *Institutional Research; *Junior Colleges; *Research; *Researchers

ABSTRACT

This review notes two major trends characterizing institutional research in community colleges today: (1) the communication of research results, and (2) the shift toward applied rather than theoretical research. A third trend noted is the desire by certain persons to create an institutional position of "Information Dean," who would provide needed information to decision makers. Several organizations established for exchanging information about community colleges are: the American Educational Research Association's Special Interest Group in Community Junior College Research, the Council of Community College Boards, the Community College Social Science Association, the California Educational Computing Consortium, the Audio-Tutorial Congress, and the Mountain States Community College Consortium. The changing emphasis in research from student characteristics-type tabulations to more pertinent decision-making topics is a result of increased concern for information needed "in" the community college rather than "on" it. The trend is toward research that results in usable models and that which analyzes existing procedures to make them more effective and efficient. (AL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ERIC

Volume 6, Number 8

JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

April 1972

Published by the American Association of Junior Colleges

ED 060831

TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The American Educational Research Association, at its national meeting in Chicago, April 3-7, 1972, will set a major milestone for community college institutional research. At this conference, the Special Interest Group for community college research will have four paper sessions, a business meeting, and an informal session sponsored by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges. The event will mark the culmination of the efforts of many who want to create a national platform for community college institutional research.

The meeting is significant, for it indicates several trends and developments in institutional research, some of which are examined in this special AERA issue of the *Junior College Research Review*. The developments are less a matter of research technique than of recognizing the need for research findings to aid in decision making.

Major Trends

Two major trends characterize institutional research in the community college today: one is communication of research results to practitioners and between those involved in the research; two is greater emphasis on what many call "applied" research, as opposed to "theoretical." The two trends are leading to the creation of *applicable* rather than *abstract* models.

JC 720 075

Some feel a third and influential trend in institutional research may alter the image and functions of the institutional researcher in the community college. Several knowledgeable junior college administrators have spoken of creating an "Office of Information," directed by an "Information Dean," that would design a system for collecting institutional data to be used by college decision makers. It would establish a common data base for all and make the collection of data an ongoing process. It would be the job of the Information Dean to interpret, analyze, and report his findings regularly to the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and the institutional community at large.

The Clearinghouse purposes are quite in tune with the developments in institutional research. It varies its operations in keeping with the trends described in this report. Many readers may be familiar with the functions of the Clearinghouse, but to refresh their memories and inform new readers, some of its basic services are listed below.

1. Document searches on any topic dealing with community college development can be made on request. They cover all documents in the collection (approximately 2,000). Abstracts on the subject are pulled from the files and copies sent to the requester along with any other relevant references and data on the subject. There is no charge for the service or the materials.

2. Because the Clearinghouse publishes research on the community college, it has been its practice to issue publications jointly with other organizations. Thus, its publication activities are as varied as the organizations with whom it cooperates.

3. With over 100,000 community college practitioners in the country, it cannot possibly maintain a stable mailing list. It has been the policy, therefore, to disseminate published materials only through its selective mailing lists of organizations formed to contribute to community college development, including the AERA/SIG, Council of Community College Boards, Community College Social Science Association, and subscribers to the *Junior College Research Review*.

4. A major activity of the Clearinghouse is supporting institutional research in the community colleges, whose research efforts have long been subordinated to and remote from the promotional and developmental activities of the institution. Before the community college became the major enterprise it is today, decision makers seemed indifferent to how the institution used its relatively limited resources. Moreover, when the enrollment was relatively small and the curriculum stable, most problems could be solved by traditional procedures.

Requests and inquiries received at the Clearinghouse clearly show that decision making no longer relies entirely on personal judgment or past methods. Unfortunately, while institutional research in the college has increased measurably over the past few years, few administrators have given a firm commitment to using its findings in decision making. Nevertheless, research studies are increasing in number and improving in quality.

Improvements in Communication Among Researchers

People at all levels of education, interested in community college research, have felt the need to establish communication links among themselves. Members of AERA have formed a Special Interest Group (SIG) for community junior college research. Vernon Hendrix (University of Minnesota) is the current national chairman and the Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges is the national secretariat.

The AERA/SIG is divided into several regional sections, led by community college researchers and university-based associates, enabling those who cannot attend the national meeting of the AERA to readily exchange information. Regional chairmen who served this past year were Michael Schafer, Henry Moughamian, Paul Elsner, Young Park, Henry Reitan, Ernest Beals, and Frances Kelly.

An *AERA/SIG Newsletter* is published and distributed to the membership by the Clearinghouse. The November 1971 issue listed over forty-five research projects undertaken by AERA/SIG members in the fall of 1971. Each researcher received abstracts of ERIC documents in his particular area of interest. Further opportunities to exchange information are planned at the April AERA meeting through formal presentations of papers and informal meetings sponsored by the Clearinghouse.

Other groups interested in research exchange information and publications through the Clearinghouse, using it as a reference source. Notable examples of dissemination are *The Danforth Foundation Directory of Self-Instructional Materials,* four issues of the Topical Paper series devoted to reading programs in the Community College, and the *Community College Social Science Quarterly.*

New Organizational Emphasis

Several new groups have been organized in the past few years, pointing up the need for a base from which those interested in research may exchange information and develop themselves in the unique level of community college education. Examples of these newly emerging groups are:

1. *Council of Community College Boards.* This council is a subdivision of the National School Boards Association, one of the largest educational groups in the country. The CCCB is interested in community college research from a layman's point of view. Its members want more information both for decision making and for keeping abreast of recent developments in all phases of the community college.

The special research needs of this organization include fiscal accountability, federal legislation, master plans for new colleges, instructional evaluation, and innovations. The Clearinghouse is cooperating in several ways: assistance with publications that include a handbook for new trustees; establishment of a model information system to identify specific sources of information; and, of course, maintaining the user services of the Clearinghouse.

2. *Community College Social Science Association.* This group emphasizes subject matter, but the members are also concerned with community college organization, instruction, curriculum development, and innovation. It was notably successful in convening its first national conference in 1971 and in launching a major publication effort, the *Community College Social Science Quarterly,* this past year.

3. *California Educational Computing Consortium.* The expanding use of computers in all phases of education is demonstrated by the CECC. Based in California and only three years old, it has rapidly become the major source of information on computer science, for both the community college and higher education in general. Research and studies of interest to the CECC include computer-assisted instruction, administrative uses in registration and student records, curriculum development in computer sciences, and articulation with secondary and four-year institutions.

4. *Audio-Tutorial Congress.* Attendants at the Third Annual Audio-Tutorial Conference at Purdue University last November, of whom over half were community college instructors, formed this congress to promote audio-tutorial instruction in their colleges. Their special interests are instructional objectives for college courses, self-instructional material, audio-tutorial software and hardware, and the development of "learning mastery" in teaching.

5. *Mountain States Community College Consortium.* Seventeen community colleges in the Rocky Mountain area formed a cooperative union to upgrade their institutions last year. Special areas designated for further study include developmental (remedial) programs, identification and selection of methods for evaluating faculty and administrative work or output, and improved instructional methodology and effectiveness.

These are examples of how community colleges are organizing bases in every segment of their operation to exchange information and identify common problems for which research offers possible solutions. Junior college educators are no longer isolated from the mainstream of the research being conducted in other fields.

Changed Emphasis in Community College Research

Examining the list of projects under way (as reported by AERA/SIG members) shows that research is shifting to such topics as career education from those that merely tabulate student characteristics. A review of the reports in the ERIC collection from the summer of 1969 to the present reveals that about half the listings in *Research in Education* were descriptive studies of students, but only seven of the forty-five responses from AERA/SIG members named current studies of this nature.

Similarly, studies on curriculum development and instruction have been radically reduced. About 40 per cent of the studies from 1969 to the present were on some aspect of curriculum development, but the survey of current research projects revealed only four of them. Researchers are concentrating on specific areas of curriculum rather than on development in general in an attempt to create models that can be immediately replicated.

Practitioners throughout the country are now interested in career education programs, indicating how important they are to the U.S. Commissioner of Education. Twenty-five per cent of the proposed studies were on this subject, and reading projects and a number of other curriculum studies were indirectly related to it. Also related are the community surveys to determine the current educational needs of different parts of the community. Special solutions are sought for rural, urban, senior citizens', and women's needs.

Community surveys on accountability are also being conducted to determine the relative importance of the educational programs to the community and to the institution itself. Other studies projected for this year on teacher preparation and in-service training (five were reported) also take note of accountability. Several deal with the effectiveness of certain teaching methods, particularly the new teacher preparation programs with a greater emphasis on student learning than

on traditional teaching styles.

A surprising number of studies are being done on community college administration, e.g., accountability and alternative structures of organization. Among other notable projects now under way is a special one on "middle management" in the community college, the level that has been known traditionally as the "department" or "divisional" chairman. Four recent regional conferences on divisional chairmen led to a Clearinghouse study on middle management that examines alternate models of organization, teacher evaluation, compensation, and the development of a handbook for division chairmen.

While educators have always been interested in educational organization, it is a relatively new idea for community college educators to undertake an analysis of their institutional structure. Until six months ago, few such studies were conducted, but recently a number have been started. This may indicate that administrative organization has become a major interest of both faculty and administration, an interest given impetus perhaps by learning and fiscal accountability studies. Furthermore, national implementation of the Program Planning Budget System (PPBS) (the state of California has made it mandatory in public schools) has triggered a number of studies on its use in the community college. Attempting to measure learning and to relate its effectiveness to finances is extremely difficult, but it is one of the new information needs of the community college. The relationship is being studied by the League for Innovation in the Community College. Related studies include projects on cost analysis and behavior objectives, student-faculty ratios, and space use.

Another study that is under way, by John Lombardi of the Clearinghouse staff, is on the financial crisis in the community colleges. It deals primarily with alternate models of junior college financing. Several models are being examined and will be suggested as possible solutions to funding problems.

These are examples of the prime subjects of community college research today. The Clearinghouse is working closely with a number of organizations to determine their current research needs and to assist them in developing alternate models for immediate implementation. The Clearinghouse, for instance, is currently helping the Council of Community College Boards develop an information system tailored to its special needs. It will concentrate on key decision-making areas and will attempt to identify sources of information (called "meta-information").

Emerging Trends

Discernible trends in the development of institutional research may have far-reaching effects on research in the community college. First, the research has become more than a topic of study within the framework of higher education or education in general. Examples of its "academic acceptance" are the interest shown in the AERA and the establishment of a Special Interest Group in community college research. However, institutional research must still become an integral part of community college operations. Much can be done by interested people in the American Association of Junior Colleges, state and regional community college groups, and other organizations. More emphasis must be placed on the word "institutional" in institutional research; research should be *of* the community college rather than *about* it. Making institutional research truly institutional can be readily accomplished. Practitioners can redefine their purpose and functions so that the data collected in their institutions become the standard for all decision making — in contrast to data collected for a special project. Devising a system of data collection for all phases of the institutional operation would make the input both constant and uniform. This is similar to the suggestion for the creation of an information dean in place of the institutional researcher.

A second trend in institutional research is the emphasis on applied research. The increase in the number of research projects on real problems reported by AERA/SIG members (and the increased demands by practitioners for them) may presage a major change of goal for institutional research. It may well become "user-oriented" rather than "producer-oriented."

A third development in institutional research is the growing demand, expressed by both organizations and individual practitioners, for information rather than research studies *per se*, that is, information needed *in* the community college as contrasted to that *on* the community college. Both kinds of data may be used for decision making, but demand for the former has been increasing. Research that results in a usable model and research that analyzes existing procedures to make them more effective and efficient are sought today.

Finally, institutional research (and research in general) seems to have become more sensitive to the demands of the community and legislative agencies, as shown by the amount of research on career education and accountability. The interest in accountability may have positive effects on research, insofar as information on the institution is now a necessity, rather than a tired exercise. Consequently, the suggestion for an "Information Dean" is less far-fetched than it seems.

It is a welcome relief to see that institutional research is undergoing changes in approach, emphasis, and purpose. Fortunately, many doubtful practices have not yet become embedded in the operation of a community college, for, if this were the case, changes would be difficult or even impossible.

It was noted above that institutional research should be *of* the institution, rather than *about* it. Literature on this activity is generally only about the superficial occurrences in community colleges. As a departure from this cursory approach, the ERIC Clearinghouse has collected nine essays from practitioners who deal with the day-to-day problems of institutional research. Their insights into the operation of an office of institutional research have been published as Topical Paper No. 30, "The Practitioner Views Institutional Research." It will be released as a companion to this issue of the *Junior College Research Review*.

Being the first of its kind, this publication has considerable significance for community college research — it is written for practitioners by practitioners about their own work. Whatever might be said about how institutional research should be organized and operated, these papers tell how it is *actually* done amid all the restrictions and problems found in an institutional framework.

Areas in institutional research that require change need identification and critical examination. One may marvel, however, at the amount of work that is actually accomplished by the practitioners. The will and ability exist; the great lack is administrators with the foresight to use institutional research for their decision making.

Young Park
Public Administrative Analyst
ERIC Clearinghouse
for Junior Colleges

Abstracts of the ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) Documents can be found in *Research in Education (RIE)*. This publication of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare is available from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 at $1.75 for a single issue or $21.00 for twelve issues yearly. The index to it is cumulated annually and semi-annually.

The ERIC Documents (ED's) listed in the bibliography may be purchased on microfiche (MF) or in hard copy (HC) from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Drawer O, Bethesda, Md. 20014. MF prices are $.65 per document, regardless of size; HC costs $3.29 per units of 100 pages or less. Payment must accompany orders of $10.00 or less and should include sales tax where applicable. No handling charge is required.

The *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)* indexes articles from more than 500 current journals and periodicals. It is available from CCM Information Sciences, Inc., 866 Third Avenue, New York 10022 at $3.50 per copy or $39.00 for twelve issues annually.

The *Junior College Research Review (JCRR)* is compiled and edited at the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Room 96, Powell Library, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90024.

The *JCRR* is published ten times per academic year. Subscriptions are available at $3.00 each from the American Association of Junior Colleges, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. It is published and copyrighted by AAJC. Copyright is claimed by AAJC until April 1977.

Besides processing documents for the ERIC system and issuing the *Junior College Research Review*, the Clearinghouse publishes two other series of its own. The Monographs are in-depth studies of interpretations of research on junior colleges. They are available from AAJC at $2.00 each. The Topical Papers are either research models useful for general junior college testing or items of occasional interest to the field. A limited supply of Topical Papers still in print is available from the Clearinghouse. Back issues can be purchased through ERIC Document Reproduction Service. The Clearinghouse will be pleased to send a free list of titles and their availability.

Hazel Horn, Editor

Subscribers to the *Junior College Research Review* will receive a copy of the new Topical Paper (No. 30), "The Practitioner Views Institutional Research," with a foreword by Paul Elsner. The contributors are Ben K. Gold, Richard W. Brightman, Ann Bromley, Fred A. Snyder, Harry Moughamian, James E. Cook, and Boris Blai, Jr.

All those interested in junior college institutional research are reminded that the Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges will sponsor an evening session during the AERA Convention in Chicago, April 3-7, 1972, to discuss research topics of greatest current interest.

JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

American Association of Junior Colleges

One Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY the American Association of Junior Colleges TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."